

by 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 914 021 4

19
7
y 1

THE CHANGED OUTLOOK

ADDRESS BY

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER, LL. D.

PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

DELIVERED AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND
FORTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL BANQUET OF
THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK, NOVEMBER EIGHTEENTH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN

31

THE CHANGED OUTLOOK.

ADDRESS BY NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

MR. PRESIDENT, GENTLEMEN OF THE CHAMBER.—Four years ago you gave me the privilege of speaking in this presence. At that time I chose as my subject, Business and Politics. We were then approaching the end of a Presidential term and facing a national election: we were concerned, gravely concerned, with domestic problems, particularly with those manifold and important questions which arise out of the relations between government and business. To-night I have chosen as the topic on which to speak to you, quite informally and briefly, The Changed Outlook: for in the interval of those four years there has been a revolution in our thinking and a complete change in the prospect that opens out before us. Once again we are approaching the end of a Presidential term and once again we are facing a national election, but the outlook to-day is strangely and solemnly different from what it was four years ago.

It is not easy for one who lives in the midst of on-rushing events to judge calmly and accurately either of their significance or of their direction. The man who is borne helplessly downstream by a roaring torrent has little opportunity to observe the foliage that may adorn the banks, or to determine with certainty whether he is to be dashed to pieces by the cataract of Niagara or borne harmlessly into the peaceful waters of a mountain lake. So it is with ourselves. The wild onrush of events in a world of war; the sudden and startling changes in finance, in commerce, in industry; the quiet movement of armies and of navies by which some of the hopes and ambitions of two generations are gratified; the dazed perplexity of

the world's most trusted leaders,—all these are characteristic of the days through which we are living.

When the mid-summer sun set on the evening of Friday, July 31, 1914, it set upon a world upon which it was never to rise again. Never again was that sun to rise upon the same world. As if by magic, transportation and communication stopped: the wells of credit were dried up; commerce and industry were brought to a standstill: men leaped to arms and to the assembling of the devilishly ingenious instruments of destruction: science which had been caring for the health, the comfort and the prosperity of man was instantly bent with amazing ingenuity and skill to the wholesale slaughter of human beings and to the destruction and waste of property on a scale unprecedented in all recorded history. This is neither the time nor the place to inquire why these strange and startling things took place. It is sufficient to observe that they did take place and that the whole world order was changed in a night.

The peoples who are engaged in this titanic struggle are not untamed barbarians or wild Indians of the virgin forest. They are the best-trained and most highly educated peoples in the world. They have had every advantage that schools and universities can offer, and they have been associated for generations with literature and science and art and everything that is fine and splendid in what we call civilization. What we now know, even those of us who were most loath to believe it, is that under this thin veneer of civilization the elementary human passions of jealousy, envy, hatred and malice were so lightly confined that at the touch of a magic spring they burst forth to overwhelm everything that seems to make life worth living. Moreover, it is now so plain that even the dullest can see that the nations of Europe had been psychologically, politically, and even strategetically, at war for many years. In the guise of an armed peace they were really in conflict, and jealousy, suspicion and intrigue were abroad on every hand. Plans of instant mobilization and of quick attack were all in readiness, and the more ardent spirits were tugging hard at the bonds of conventionality that restrained them from overt acts. Europe had been at war for years. What

happened on August 1, 1914, was that the curtain was lifted so that all men might see; and the physical conflict of armies and navies followed as a final and dramatic incident in a contest that was on that day made evident, but that was not on that day begun.

If I read history aright, only once before since the beginning of man's records has any similar catastrophe occurred in the Western world. With the downfall of the Roman Empire and the inrush of the barbarian hordes from the forests and plains of the North there was a wiping out of Greek and Roman civilization and of their evidences that was as complete as it was terrible. From that day to this there has been no similar catastrophe in Europe. There have been wars, many and severe. There have been revolutions devastating and terrible. There has been the spectacle of the great NAPOLEON defying the whole of Europe, but finally succumbing to the power of his adversaries. But not since the break up of Roman civilization has the world seen anything that can compare with what is now going on before our eyes. Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia are being tramped by contending armies or are held in the grip of the laws of war.

It is idle to say, gentlemen, quite idle to say, that the American people are on the other side of the world and that these clashings and crashings are no concern of theirs. Ask the cotton grower in the South, or the copper miner in the far West, or the lumberman on Puget Sound, or the shipper in New York, in Baltimore, or New Orleans, or the banker in Wall street, in State street or in La Salle street, whether he knows that there is a war in Europe, and get his answer. Ask the student of international law, or the expounder of political ethics and the sanctity of treaties, or the devoted believer in civil liberty, whether the United States has any interest in this conflict, and get his answer!

No, Mr. President, it is no longer possible for the United States, ostrich like, to plunge its head into the sands of a supposed isolation and to assume that its policies, its influences, and its ideals are not part of the wider world. [Applause.] The outlook has wholly changed. The future, and in particular the immediate future, is

charged with serious international interest and with heavy international responsibility. Of this interest we cannot divest ourselves, and of this responsibility we dare not, without proving false to our trust as guardians of the conscience of democracy and keepers of the faith in civil liberty as the highest political aim and object of mankind. [Applause.]

There are reasons, good and sufficient and easily understood by the reader of history, why America's interest in international conditions is now much greater and much more important than ever before. In the history of people, it is a well-known fact that internal national development must precede international influence and direction. Not until a nation has unified itself, perfected reasonably well its instruments of government and become conscious of an ideal and of a mission which that ideal serves, can it be ready to take its place at the council table of nations and to exercise a shaping influence in the formulation and carrying out of world policies. That time has now come in the history of the United States. [Applause.] We have expanded across the continent, and have settled and developed the waste places. We have established, after a long debate, and by an epoch-making military struggle, the unity of the nation and the supremacy of the national ideal. We have developed great systems of transportation and manifold industries, and we have accumulated vast national wealth. We have made creditable contributions to science, to literature, and to the arts. The question now to press upon ourselves is, Are we ready and equipped to bear the responsibilities that the close of this war will place upon the American people? Are we prepared?

In one of the noblest orations of antiquity, PERICLES used these words in speaking to his fellow citizens of the Athenians who had died in the war with Sparta: "The whole earth is in the sepulchre of famous men; and their glory is not graven only on stone over their alive earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives. For you it now remains to rival what they have done, and, knowing the secret of happiness to be freedom and the secret of freedom to be a brave heart, squarely to face the war and all its perils." Surely these sonorous words sounding

across the centuries seem almost to have been meant for our ears to hear. We are to weave our lives, our aspirations and our ideals into the stuff of other men's lives; we are to remember that the secret of happiness is freedom and that the secret of freedom is a brave heart, and then we are squarely to face this war and all that it brings in its train.

There is much earnest speech among us in regard to national preparedness, and it is urged by many and influential voices that we must beware lest the calamity that fell so suddenly upon Europe should be forced against our wish or will upon us. Surely we must reckon with facts as they are, and not as we would wish them to be. [Applause.] We may turn our faces to the stars, but we must have a care to keep our feet on the firm ground. Nevertheless, there is a more serious and a more important aspect of national preparedness that has not yet been so much dwelt upon. Our chiefest task, Mr. President, is to prepare our hearts and our minds to do our full duty as Americans to bind up the wounds of a stricken world and to lead the way to that new construction of the overturned political fabric which, if it is to endure, can rest upon no other principles than those of democracy, of freedom, of civil liberty, of international responsibility and honor, to which we profess such earnest allegiance and through faith in which our nation has grown great. [Applause.]

It is true of nations, as of men, that we are our brothers' keepers. Their interests are increasingly our interests, and our interests are increasingly theirs. We have no wish or will to interfere with problems that belong to Europe alone: but surely non-interference does not mean absence of interest in them or an absence of influence upon them or over them. In the MONROE Doctrine, in the policy of the Open Door, and in the widespread objection to Oriental immigration, we have given concrete evidences of a developed and developing international viewpoint and international policy. We must, by taking counsel together, by study and by reflection, prepare ourselves to say to a listening world what our international policy is and what it is to be; what influence we aim to exert and why, and what ideals we

propose to hold aloft in the hope that they may guide and help other peoples.

Before we can hope to influence others we must be sure of ourselves. We must without delay undertake the better conservation and organization of our own national resources of every kind. We must make it plain that, by voluntary effort and without sacrificing our traditional American principles to the demands of a bureaucratic organization, we too can effectively mobilize the industrial resources of a great nation. It is for American democracy to prove that it can secure the highest type of national preparedness and the highest type of national effectiveness without ceasing to be either American or democratic. In the recently established Trade Commission and in the Tariff Commission, whose quick establishment is so strongly supported, we shall have governmental instrumentalities which might readily be made the centre for co-operative industrial effort and for the more complete equipment of this nation in respect to all the great basic industries. The problem of labor must be faced with courage, with frankness, and with sympathy; for industrial peace and satisfaction is as necessary a prerequisite of international peace and contentment as it is of national security and happiness.

[Applause.]

Moreover, it behooves us to cultivate a becoming national modesty. It was our old friend, MR. BRYCE, who pointed out to us in the *American Commonwealth*, that the enormous force of public opinion is a danger, a danger to the people themselves as well as to their leaders, because it fills them with an undue confidence in their own wisdom, their own virtue, and their own freedom. In order to guard ourselves against the vice of self-complacency we must constantly re-examine and re-state our moral and our political ideals, and we must not fail to give due weight to the moral and political ideals of other people.

The world mission that we might have waited for through another century has come to us to-day from the hand of fate. We can remain true to the injunction of WASHINGTON that we steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, and yet do

our full international duty : for what we should seek is not an alliance, entangling or otherwise, with any portion of the foreign world, but rather relations with the whole of that world and with every part of it, in order that in a spirit of friendship and good temper and constructive statesmanship we may do our full share in raising that world to a higher plane.

No one dare predict just what the end of this world war will be, or when that end will come. It is possible, of course, that this cataclysm marks the end of centuries of progress, and it is possible that man in 1914 crossed over the watershed of civilization and is now to descend on the other side towards steadily growing barbarism and the steadily extending rule of force. That I say is possible ; but I for one am an unconquerable optimist. I prefer to read history differently and to see in this appalling catastrophe what the Greek called a *katharsis*, or cleansing of the spirit. I prefer to think of it as history's way of teaching beyond peradventure or dispute the fallacy and the folly of the old ways and the old policies. Surely that struggle for the balance of power which the historian STUBBS described as the principle which gives unity to the plot of modern history,—surely that struggle has proved its futility. Surely we can see the vanity of Ententes and Alliances and of a division of the world into heavily armed camps each waiting for an opportunity or for an excuse to pounce upon the other. Surely the international polities of a PALMERSTON, or a DISRAELI, or a BISMARCK, striking and splendid as they were in their own day,—surely those policies are put behind us and are outgrown forever.

A democratic federated people can teach the world democracy and the use of the federative principle. A people devoted to civil liberty and to international honor, no less lightly held than the honor of an individual—that people, can teach the world the foundations upon which to rebuild the shattered fabric of international law and of broken treaties.

The outlook before the people of the United States has changed. When JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN returned from South Africa his message to the people of Great Britain was : " You must learn to

think imperially." The message which any American alive to the world's situation to-day must bring to his fellow citizens is, you must learn to think internationally! Domestic policies and problems are perhaps no less important than they have been in the past, but by their side and for the immediate future surpassing them in interest and in importance are the international problems and the international policies of the people of the United States. For those problems and for those policies we must prepare—prepare thoughtfully, seriously, speedily: for when the war shall be ended, we may truly say, as GAMBETTA said to the French people forty-five years ago, "Now that the danger is past, the difficulties begin." [Applause.]



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 914 021 4